

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 12454 261419Z

11

ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6551

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 12454

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TH, SCUL

SUBJECT: AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE DECIDES TO CANCEL FOURTH
OF JULY PICNIC

1. ONE OF AGENDA ITEMS DURING AMBASSADOR'S MONTHLY MEETING WITH AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD OF GOVERNORS JUUNE 26, WHICH HAD BEEN REQUESTED BY AMCHAM BOARD, WAS THREATENED STUDENT DEMONSTRATION ON JULY 4, AND PARTICULARLY EFFECT THIS MIGHT HAVE ON AMCHAM'S PLANNED FOURTH OF JULY PICNIC FOR AMERICAN COMMUNITY AFTER GENERAL DISCUSSION WHICH INCLUDED REPORTS FROM CHAIRMAN OF CHAMBER'S PROGRAM COMMITTEE AND EMBASSY SECURITY OFFICER, BOARD VOTED TO CANCEL PICNIC WITH OPTION OF RESCHEDULING IT ON LABOR DAY.

2. PROGRAM COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORTED THAT ALTHOUGH INFORMAL POLL OF SAMPLING OF CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP (WHO WERE NOT GIVEN OPTION OF POSTPONEMENT) INDICATED MAJORITY FAVORED HOLDING RATHER THAN CANCELLING PICNIC, PROGRAM COMMITTEE HAD NEVERTHELESS VOTED BY SMALL MAJORITY TO POSTPONE IT. BASIS FOR THIS WAS TWOFOLD: (1) RISK OF VIOLENCE OR INCIDENTS OCCURRING, WHETHER BECAUSE OF DEMONSTRATORS OR TOO MUCH FREE BEER, AND (2) RISK THAT ONLY SMALL
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 12454 261419Z

NUMBER OF AMERICANS WOULD TURN OUT, WHETHER BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER

SECURITY OR BECAUSE IT IS BEGINNING OF THREE DAY WEEKEND WITH MANY LEAVING TOWN. FINAL DECISION, HOWEVER, WAS UP TO AMCHAM BOARD.

3. SECURITY OFFICER REPORTED THAT POLICE NOW EXPECT ABOUT 5,000 DEMONSTRATORS TO APPEAR BEFORE EMBASSY, WHICH THEY ARE OBLIGATED AND PREPARED TO PROTECT, AND THAT POLICE ALSO RECOGNIZE THEIR OBLIGATION TO GIVE PROTECTION AT PROPOSED SITE OF PICNIC (SEVERAL MILES AWAY), IF PICNIC WERE HELD. HE POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH POLICE ARE EXPECTING DEMONSTRATION TO BE PEACEFUL, AND TO BE CONFINED TO FRONT OF EMBASSY, THERE WAS ALWAYS POSSIBILITY OF UNANTICIPATED INCIDENTS OCCURRING WHEN LARGE CROWDS GET TOGETHER.

4. IN DISCUSSION PRECEDING VOTE (WITH ONLY ONE DISSENTER) TO CANCEL EVENT WITH OPTION OF RESCHEDULING, BOARD MEMBERS EVIDENTLY RECOGNIZED THERE IS A RISK THAT THE PRESS COULD USE THIS AGAINST THEM. ALTHOUGH THEY WILL NOT ANNOUNCE DECISION TO THE PRESS, THEY WILL OF NECESSITY HAVE TO MAIL WRITTEN NOTIFICATION TO CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP, AND ASSUME THAT PRESS WILL LEARN OF IT. CHAMBER EVIDENTLY INTENDS NOT TO SPECIFY REASONS IN THEIR NOTIFICATION.

5. ON RELATED MATTER DURING MEETING, ONE BOARD MEMBER, KODAK'S MARKETING MANAGER, HUGH RICHARDSON, WHO IS ALSO A WELL-KNOWN OLYMPIC BASKETBALL REFEREE, CONFIRMED NEWSPAPER REPORT OF THAT MORNING THAT KODAK WAS WITHDRAWING ITS TEAM FROM BANGKOK'S 1975 INTER-CLUB DIVISION BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT SCHEDULED TO BEGIN JULY 15. PRESS REPORTED THAT WITHDRAWAL WAS DUE TO INABILITY TO GATHER PLAYERS FOR THE TEAM, SEVERAL HAVING RETURNED TO THE U.S. RICHARDSON SAID THAT SUCH JUSTIFICATION WAS GIVEN TO THE PRESS, BUT THAT DECISION WAS ACTUALLY MADE AFTER QUIET DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER TEAMS IN THE LEAGUE, ESPECIALLY THE BANGKOK BANK TEAM, WITH AGREEMENT REACHED THAT THIS WAS NOT A GOOD TIME FOR A TEAM MADE UP ALMOST ENTIRELY OF AMERICANS TO APPEAR IN A THAI TOURNAMENT.

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